

Book Review

The National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History

by Polly Welts Kaufman

Polly Welts Kaufman in *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History* presents an impressive array of women who have cared deeply about the national parks as national treasure to be enjoyed and protected. Kaufman, who teaches women's history at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, examines women travelers, mountain climbers, environmentalists, artists, park rangers, and many more women whose lives touched and were touched by the National Park Service. Moving through almost a century and a half, Kaufman discusses literally hundreds of women who contributed to the evolution of the National Park Service. Indeed, this is a book about many women's voices. *National Parks and the Woman's Voice A History* tells a previously untold story and in so doing makes available a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the history of the National Park Service.

Kaufman has viewed her topic through very broad lenses. Women who came into contact in any way with the National Park Service are pertinent to this undertaking. Kaufman describes the first party of women to climb Long's Peak and Mount Whitney and examines the lives of women botanists and anthropologists who were attracted to the wilderness life and culture. She chronicles the contributions of many 19th-century women writers and artists who were publicists for the national parks, describing and presenting the beauty and wonder of the natural landscape of the great parks of the American West.

The strength of this book is its accumulation of information about many women's lives that have been almost forgotten. Kaufman also identifies several themes and patterns that emerge as women express their distinctive concerns and make their special contributions. These themes include women's initial contact and experiences at various parks, women advocates for the parks, the way women were affected by the National Park Service's dual goals of protecting the parks and communicating with visitors, and the National Park Service's personnel policies toward women.

This study builds on several decades of research. In the acknowledgments, Kaufman notes that this book had its genesis in the work of

Dorothy Boyle Huyck, who gathered primary sources and taped 140 oral interviews to examine both the opportunities and the problems women faced in the National Park Service. Following Dorothy Huyck's early death in 1979, Kaufman continued the project building on Huyck's resources which her family made available.

Kaufman notes that by the early-20th century women had moved beyond the role of observers to that of protectors when they believed places defining the nation's history or landscapes inspiring the country's spiritual well-being were in danger. Individual women as well as women's organizations, such as the Federation of Women's Clubs and the Garden Club of America, played a key role as advocates for the parks in all regions of the country.

As Kaufman examines the 19th century and the early-20th and late-20th century, she traces the changing perceptions by National Park Service leadership toward the spouse of employees. The earliest view was that western assignments were too dangerous and that "park wives" were not welcome at parks. Later, park superintendents shifted to a position that highly valued the unpaid wife and some superintendents felt that when the park hired a married man, it got "two for the price of one." She examines the careers of early women naturalists in the national parks in the 1920s and their setbacks as more male-oriented policies limited their options. As women entered Park Service careers in greater numbers in the 1960s and '70s, some postponed marriage for fear that it would deter their careers. However, by the end of the 20th century, women had gained sufficient stature in the Park Service to recommend that the administration address the long-standing issue of dual career couples.

A theme intertwined through much of the book is the National Park Service's transformation from its early military orientation to one of public communication. A key position in the National Park Service, the park ranger, had its roots in the cavalymen riding the range to protect the cultural and natural resources from fire, poaching, and other kinds of potential harm. These early rangers lived fairly isolated lives. The gradual shift toward an emphasis on meeting the needs of visitors and offering educational programs provided an opening for women's talents

and skills. Women's professional advancement in the National Park Service paralleled the shift from the military ranger mode to that of the park as an outdoor classroom.

This is a pioneering study. Prior to this book, only a few women such as Mary Colter, who made significant architectural contributions to the Grand Canyon National Park, have been the subject of scholarly research. There had been no previous attempt to bring together the many facets of women's experiences and contributions to the National Park Service. But like all pioneering works, it touches on many individuals and themes that would profit from further exploration. Scholars and students of the National Park Service will find in this book a wealth of information, references to extensive primary sources and archives, as well as many leads for future research projects.

—Page Putnam Miller, Director
National Coordinating Committee
for the Promotion of History

Women's History National Historic Landmarks

Prudence Crandall House, Canterbury, CT
M. Carey Thomas Library, Bryn Mawr, PA
National Training School for Women and Girls,
Washington, DC
United Charities Building, New York, NY
Laura Ingalls Wilder House, Mansfield, MO
Sarah Orne Jewett House, South Berwick, ME
Wendover (Frontier Nursing Service Headquarters),
Wendover, KY
New England Hospital for Women and Children,
Roxbury, MA
Vassar College Observatory, Poughkeepsie, NY
Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Building (Brown Building),
New York, NY

Madam C.J. Walker Manufacturing Company,
Indianapolis, IN
Frances Perkins House, Washington, DC
Pine Mountain Settlement School, Bledsoe, KY
General Federation of Women's Clubs Headquarters,
Washington, DC
Rachel Carson House, Silver Spring, MD
Mabel Dodge Luhan House, Taos, NM
Zora Neale Hurston House, Fort Pierce, FL
Pewabic Pottery, Detroit, MI
Paulsdale, Mt. Laurel Township, NJ
Ivy Green (Helen Keller's Birthplace),
Tuscumbia, AL
Ellen Swallow Richards House, Jamaica Plain, MA
Angelus Temple, Los Angeles, CA
New York Studio School of Drawing, Painting, &
Sculpture, New York, NY
Andrews Methodist Episcopal Church,
Grafton, WV
Atalaya and Brookgreen Gardens,
Murrells Inlet, SC
Harriet Taylor Upton House, Warren, OH
Alice Austen House, Staten Island, NY
Kate Chopin House, Cloutierville, LA
Birdcraft Museum and Sanctuary, Fairfield, CT
Picotte Memorial Hospital, Walthill, NE
Ida Tarbell House, Easton, CT
Margaret Sanger Clinic, New York, NY
Marie Webster House, Marion, IN
Philadelphia School of Design for Women,
Philadelphia, PA
Elmshaven (Ellen White House), St. Helena, CA
Race Street Meetinghouse, Philadelphia, PA
New Century Guild, Philadelphia, PA
Lukens Historic District, Coatesville, PA

—Patricia Henry
NPS



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